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INFO IRAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 130338

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/21/2019
TAGS: [CASC](#) [IR](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PROP](#)
SUBJECT: ACTION REQUEST: DIPNOTE ON AMCIT HIKER CASES

Classified By: Deputy Secretary Steinberg for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (U) This is an action request for Embassy Damascus.
Please see paragraph 3.

¶2. (C) The Department directs Charg to deliver as soon as possible the diplomatic note in paragraph 3 to the Chief of Staff of Syrian Vice Foreign Minister Faisal Miqdad to request assistance in urging the Iranian government to release three American citizens: Shane Bauer, Sarah Shourd, and Josh Fattal, who have been detained without formal charges since July 31, 2009 when they were hiking near the Iranian-Iraqi border. The same diplomatic note was delivered to the Syrian Ambassador to the United States Dr. Imad Moustapha on December 22.

Diplomatic Note

¶3. (U) BEGIN DIPNOTE.

His Excellency
Ambassador Faisal Miqdad,
Vice Foreign Minister of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Excellency:

I have the honor to request your assistance regarding the cases of Mr. Joshua Fattal, Mr. Shane Bauer, and Ms. Sarah Shourd, American nationals who were detained by Iranian authorities on July 31, 2009, after accidentally crossing the border from Iraq while hiking in Iraqi Kurdistan. Prior to their detention in Iran, Mr. Bauer and Ms. Shourd had been living in Damascus since late 2008. Mr. Bauer was a student of Arabic; Ms. Shourd was teaching English and learning Arabic. Mr. Fattal was visiting his friends in Syria at the time of the group's hiking vacation.

The Swiss Ambassador to Iran has been granted consular access on two occasions; the last visit was on October 29, 2009. The Swiss Ambassador and the Swiss Protecting Power continue to follow up with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs with little success, despite repeated requests, for the three hikers to contact their families and for additional consular visits. Although the Iranian government has confirmed that the three hikers are charged with illegal entry, we have received no further details on the status of their case.

I have the further honor to ask your assistance in urging Iran's leadership to release these three U.S. citizens without further delay, as a humanitarian gesture. Our goal is to ensure their safe return to the United States as quickly as possible so that they can be reunited with their families.

Accept, Excellency, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

For the Secretary of State:

END DIPNOTE.

Additional Background for Post

¶4. (C) On July 31, Iranian authorities detained Shane Bauer, Sarah Shourd, and Josh Fattal while hiking near the Iraq/Iran border. On August 11, the Swiss Ambassador to Iran received confirmation by phone of the detention of three American hikers from the Iranian Vice Minister for Europe, and was granted consular access on two occasions, September 29 and October 29. The Swiss Ambassador and SPP continue to follow up with the MFA and the Iranian Mission in Bern with little success despite repeated requests for the three hikers to contact their loved ones and for additional consular visits. Having given the Iranian government time to resolve the case quietly, the families are now publicizing their concerns about their children's welfare and have enlisted Congressional, Executive, and Foreign Mission support.

Reporting Requirement

¶5. (U) Post is instructed to report any reaction to this

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diplomatic note by January 8.

¶6. (U) Department POCs for follow-up are: Brianne Marwaha, NEA/IR, 202-647-2569, MarwahaBC@State.gov; Stephanie L. Hallett, NEA/IR, 202-647-2498, HallettSL@State.gov; and Carolee Walker, CA/OCS/ACS/NESCA, 202-647-4997, WalkerCB@State.gov

¶7. (U) Department thanks post for its assistance. Please slug any response for NEA/IR, CA, P, and the NSC.
CLINTON